

ADDRESS

GOVERNOR BERT T. COMBS

The function of the Department of Highways is to build and maintain roads. This is the Department's purpose. This is its reason for being. All other functions are secondary. What measure of success in this direction has been achieved in recent years?

I think the Department of Highways in particular and the highway industry in general can justly share a sense of pride and a sense of accomplishment as we review the events of the past three years. We can fairly say that this is the best highway program in the history of Kentucky. We can say that never has Kentucky seen such a vast program of road construction. But this is the pitch of the medicine men and the soothsayers. Let us depart from generalities. Let us deal in the specifics. There are those who can quarrel with the propaganda, but none can quarrel with the facts.

What are the facts?

1. In calendar 1960, the Kentucky Department of Highways invested more money in the construction of new highways than in any previous year. During 1960, more than \$122,000,000 in construction contracts were awarded by the Department of Highways.

2. As good as the record was for 1960, the ensuing year of 1961 saw this record broken. For in calendar 1962—the year just completed— construction contracts which totalled almost \$157,000,000 were let to contractors. The 1962 awards exceeded the 1961 record year by almost 30%, by almost \$35,000,000.

3. In the first three years of the current administration, almost \$95,000,000 more has been awarded in construction contracts than was awarded in the entire four years of the previous administration.

4. 37½% more dollars have gone into road construction during the first three years of this administration than in the entire four years of the previous administration. Proof positive that no effort was made during the current administration to hoard funds for an election year. Our program has not been one of famine and feast, but one in which available funds have been utilized as they became available each and every year.

Dollars alone do not tell the entire story. How does Kentucky's highway building program compare to those in its neighboring states? How does Kentucky rank nationally? Again, let me give you the facts.

At the end of 1962:

1. Kentucky ranked first in the nation in miles of road improved financed entirely with its own money, clear evidence that before we call on others to help us we help ourselves.

2. Kentucky ranked 2nd in the nation in miles of highways improved through the use of all monies both state and federal.

3. Kentucky ranked 2nd in the nation in dollar volume of contracts awarded for roads improved without use of federal funds.

4. Kentucky ranked 8th in the nation in total dollars of money spent for all highway construction contracts.

These rankings are available for all to see and were produced from records furnished by the United States Bureau of Public Roads.

What else can we say of the highway program and the highway industry in Kentucky during the last three years? What concrete facts, what specific accomplishments can be applauded?

1. 43 miles of the Mountain Parkway, the section from Winchester to

Campton, have been designed, financed, constructed and opened for the use of the driving public.

2. An additional 33 miles of the Mountain Parkway from Campton to Salyersville have been designed, financed and placed under construction and will be opened to traffic by the end of this calendar year.

3. 127 miles of the Western Kentucky Parkway from Elizabethtown to Princeton have also been designed, financed and placed under construction and this major addition to the Kentucky turnpike system is expected to be placed under traffic this year also.

4. All together, 250 miles of interstate and turnpike routes are now being used by the public. Another 250 miles are under construction. This 500 miles of multi-lanes, divided highway represent approximately one-half of the state's planned thousand miles of new, modern, four-lane highways.

5. Kentucky became the third state in the entire nation to qualify for the so-called billboard bonus offered by the Federal government to those states which would install an effective billboard control system on its interstate highways. Kentucky will receive bonus payments of \$3,000,000 in additional Federal funds because of this program.

6. Interstate 64 between Louisville and Frankfort received national recognition when this highway was designated as one of the twenty most beautiful in the entire United States.

7. The Sherman Minton double-deck bridge between Louisville and New Albany was named as the best bridge design in the country.

8. Kentucky became the second state in the entire country to be approved for the new system of concurrent auditing and billing by the United States Bureau of Public Roads. This means faster and more current reimbursement of Federal funds because the Kentucky Department of Highways has reached a standard of performance accepted by the Bureau as one warranting fuller support of that agency.

What other significant development has occurred in the recent past? This administration has taken the leadership in enacting into law a new formula which guarantees an equitable and fair distribution to each of the 120 counties of the so-called two cent money—the rural secondary fund. This bill is a Magna Charta for the counties. You and I know beyond a reasonable shadow of a doubt that prior to the enactment of this law, no county in Kentucky was safe from political punishment in the distribution of funds for rural and secondary roads. As long as this statute remains on the law books of Kentucky, no Governor, no Highway Commissioner, no Rural Highway Commissioner can use the rural secondary monies as a political slush for rewarding certain counties only at the expense of others.

And what of the rural secondary and rural highway programs? These roads have not been neglected. The road programs affecting this type of road has had to share the publicity spotlight with the more glamorous interstate and turnpike construction projects. Last year over \$25,000,000 of state funds went into the construction and maintenance of rural and secondary roads. 871 miles of new rural and secondary roads were constructed. Over 24,000 miles of rural and secondary roads were maintained through the rural highway and rural secondary programs.

I have given you some of the specifics, some of the concrete facts which cast favor upon the highway programs of the last three years. I take no personal credit for these accomplishments for the credit is not mine to take. Nor does the personal credit belong alone to Henry Ward, although Commissioner Ward has made a personal contribution to this record above and beyond all normal demands of public service. The credit must be shared by the great mass of highway employees and by the highway industry generally. This performance could not have been accomplished, nor this record entered on the record books without the contribution which has been made by the highway contractors, the pri-

vate consulting engineering firms, and all of the other suppliers of materials and services which are so vital to the accomplishment of a program so varied and of such immensity as the modern highway program.

In spite of this record and in spite of the fact that I think we have accomplished much, I am not satisfied. Commissioner Ward would not be the man I know him to be if he were satisfied. I am sure that the Department of Highways and the highway industry generally is not satisfied. Much needs to be done. We are but in the beginning of a long range program, a program which demands the construction of a system of roads, a system designed to serve all the needs of Kentucky, all economic interests, and all geographical areas. So I pose this question to the highway industry and to the public in general: What kind of program can best accomplish the needed objective. Is not the interest of the highway industry and that of the general public compatible? In reality, are they not identical?

Let me detail for you the kind of road program and the kind of highway department Kentuckians have had to tolerate in the past and the kind which we must guard against having to tolerate in the future. This can best be detailed by posing a series of pertinent questions.

Can Kentucky afford to return to a system where road building is done on an individual project basis rather than on a planned, long range program basis?

Can Kentucky afford to return to a system wherein the major decisions regarding programing, scheduling and location of highway projects are made by political henchmen, rather than by the trained, qualified engineering personnel of the Department of Highways?

Can Kentucky afford to return to the kind of Highway Department where employees are browbeaten, coerced, hired, fired, and assessed to further political factionalism, rather than to build and maintain a system of roads?

Can Kentucky afford a system whereby property is acquired for public road rights-of-way which is detrimental both to the affected property owner and to the taxpaying public?

Should we return to a system which condones work performed off of the public rights-of-way which benefits the few at the expense of the many?

Can we return to the kind of highway department which permits and condones on the part of officials in high places a clear conflict between their public responsibility and the private interest which they espouse on the part of themselves, their relatives and their political friends?

Can we go back to a system which permits the chaos of political turbulence to cause us to have five highway commissioners within a period of a single administration?

Can we afford a system which condones the employment of management consultant firms at unbelievably exorbitant fees which makes no lasting contribution to highway management?

I have posed a series of questions to you to which there can be but one answer. The only answer is no. This is my answer and it obviously must be yours. I pose these questions to you not in any sense of political partisanship but rather in a sense of public responsibility, for in my judgment Kentucky must now answer these questions no or yes, nay or yea. There is no middle ground. There are no ifs, ands, or buts.

You have heard it said that Kentucky is on the threshold of greatness. It is. We have moved into the 20th Century. Can we stay in the 20th Century? Or must we slip back in the abyss and morass of smallness, bickering, and criminally wasteful squandering of the state road fund that has plagued us for generations.

We are about to enter a period of time when Kentuckians must be subjected to the furor of a political primary campaign for which our state is so famous. It behooves us as citizens genuinely interested in a highway program for Kentucky to fight for what we think is right. It matters not your political affiliation,

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Democrat or Republican. It matters not your factional alignment. If you are sincerely and genuinely interested in building a system of good roads for your state now is the time to stand up and be counted. In the final analysis, there can be no real conflict between what is good politics and what is good public policy. For it is an age old political maxim that the best politics is to do a good job. The best public support will be gained for the type of program which can accomplish the major objective of the Department of Highways—to build and maintain roads, roads which are so essential for Kentucky and its progress—roads which Kentucky can build, Kentucky can afford and which we must have.